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THE ROYAL HOUSE
OF
LUSIGNAN

BY

WM. EDWARD HORTON



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H. R. H. PRINCE GUY DE LUSIGNAN.

THE ROYAL HOUSE OF LUSIGNAUX:

ITS FOUNDER

AND

PRESENT REPRESENTATIVE.



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Preface.

During the past year the Christian world has been touched with sorrow by the terrible acts of cruelty wrought by the Turks upon the innocent and defenceless Armenians, and I feel confident that all Americans are interested in and sympathize with a people who not only wear the tyrant's yoke, but are murdered and persecuted beyond description. I have endeavored to give in the following pages a short history of the founder of the royal house which once governed the Armenians, and a sketch of its noble and talented representative in this generation, who takes such a deep interest in the afflicted country which his ancestor once ruled.

WM. EDWARD HORTON.

June 12, 1896.



Jewel of the Order of Mélusine.

DEDICATED
TO
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS,
PRINCE GUY DE LUSIGNAN,
PRINCE OF JERUSALEM, CYPRUS AND ARMENIA,
WITH THE HOPE THAT SOME DAY
HE MAY BECOME THE RULER OF THE
ARMENIAN PEOPLE.

THE FOUNDER OF THE ROYAL HOUSE OF LUSIGNAN.

GUY DE LUSIGNAN, King of Jerusalem and first King of Cyprus, was born about 1140, and was descended from the ancient family of Limousin, which reigned in Poitou, France. The town of Lusignan is in the department of Vienne, western France, and is noted for its ruined castle, built, according to fable, by the fairy Mélusine.

Like many of his ancestors Guy took part in the crusades, and we start with him from France as a knight of the cross, enlisted to wrest the sepulchre of Christ, and the christians at Jerusalem from the domain and cruelty of the infidel.

The incidents of his march across the continent were similar to those of knights gone before, but after his arrival at Jerusalem, he married (on Easter day, 1180) Sybilla, Marchioness of Montferrat, daughter of Amalric I. of Jerusalem, and sister of King Baldwin IV. Sybilla had previously been married to William of Montferrat, and by this marriage had one child, Baldwin V., who died September, 1186, after whose death Guy de Lusignan was crowned King of Jerusalem.

It may be of interest to note his right to the royal sceptre, so I will endeavor to trace it briefly.

The principal leader of the first crusade was that brave and valiant knight, Godfrey of Bouillon, who was chosen by the crusaders to be first king of Jerusalem,

although he would not bear the title in a city where his Lord had worn a crown of thorns. His reign lasted barely a year, when upon his death his brother Baldwin was crowned king in 1100.

During his reign of eighteen years nearly all the crusading chiefs passed away. The second successor of Godfrey was his cousin, Baldwin du Bourg, in whose reign (1118-31) Tyre became the seat of a Latin archbishopric.

After Baldwin II., the uneventful reign of Fulk of Anjou (1131-44) was followed by that of his son Baldwin III., a boy thirteen years of age, who reigned until the time of his death in 1162, when he was succeeded by his brother Amalric.

The son and successor of Amalric, Baldwin IV., was a leper, who, being obliged by his disease to appoint another as his delegate, fixed on Guy de Lusignan, the husband of his sister Sybilla. Thus on the death of Baldwin IV., and Baldwin V. (the son of Sybilla by her first husband, the Marquis of Montferrat), Guy became king of Jerusalem.

War soon broke out between the crusaders and Saladin, sovereign of Mohametan Syria, Egypt, and a portion of Mesopotamia. The Mohametans laid siege to Tiberias, and on the plain near the city both armies were drawn up for conflict.

Saladin by his superior numbers drove Guy into a position destitute of water, and during the night set fire to the neighboring woods to increase the intolerable suffering. The following day, July 4th, 1187, the weak and famished christians were defeated by the overwhelming army of Saladin, and thirty thousand valiant knights, including the Grand-Master of the Hospitallers, were killed, and King Guy, the Chief of the Order of the Temple, the

Marquis of Montferrat, Reginald of Castellon, and many other nobles were taken prisoners.

Reginald and the Templars were cruelly murdered, but King Guy was imprisoned at Damascus. Soon after, October 2, 1187, Jerusalem fell into the hands of Saladin.

At the expiration of a year King Guy was released upon surrendering Ascalon, and giving his promise to Saladin that he would abjure his kingdom, and as soon as possible go into exile beyond the sea.

After Saladin had set King Guy at liberty the clergy of the kingdom determined to release him from the bond of his oath ; both because what is done under compulsion deserves to be annulled, and because the bands of the faithful who were on their way would find in him a head and leader.

Upon being absolved from his oath he went to Tripoli, where he was joined by many of his scattered warriors, and by his brother Geoffrey who had lately landed. While here several conflicts were had with the infidel, in which the king and his knights were victorious.

After assembling his army Guy proceeded to Tyre, but admission was refused him by Conrad, Marquis of Montferrat, though the city had been committed to his custody on condition that it should be restored to the king and his heirs.

King Guy was urged by many to attack the city, but he prudently dissembled his own wrong, and hastily marched with all the army he could collect to besiege the town of Acre. This siege commenced August 28, 1189, and lasted two years. In 1191 he was joined by King Philip and the French army who had enlisted in the christian cause.

Serious contentions having risen as to who should be king of Jerusalem, and hearing that King Richard I. of

England with the English army were on the island of Cyprus on their way to join in the third crusade, Guy, in May, 1191, with three galleys, went to Cyprus to see Richard in order to obtain his advice and assistance, and while there aided the English monarch in conquering the tyrannical emperor of Cyprus, and during Richard's illness commanded the army and captured the forts of Cherimes and Didimus.

After the conquest of Cyprus, which lasted fifteen days, King Richard with King Guy and the army sailed for Acre, where Saladin was still being besieged, and on the way captured a powerful Saracen ship, which was the pride of the infidel.

Brave and diligent men were left at Cyprus to secure and supply necessary provisions for the future.

On arriving at Acre, King Richard, by a stirring address, persuaded the people not to create a strife among themselves as to the rightful ruler of the Holy City, but to devote all energy to the capture of Acre. His advice was acted upon, and Saladin and his legions gave way before the christian warriors.

The true cross which Saladin had captured and dragged through the streets of Jerusalem was retaken by Richard and his followers.

After the capture of Acre (July, 1191) the old question as to who should be king of Jerusalem broke out again with greater force than ever, and it was finally decided that Lusignan should be styled King of Jerusalem and Lord of Jaffa and Ascalon, yet if the Marquis (Conrad of Montferrat) should be the survivor he and his heirs were to have perpetual sovereignty.

The children of King Guy and Queen Sybilla—all daughters—died at an early age, and the death of their queenly mother followed soon after in the year 1190.



Acre having been taken and King Philip departed for France, the English king led the crusaders to the recovery of the sea-coast ; and the cities of Cæsarea and Jaffa were added to the kingdom of Lusignan. A march of one hundred miles from Acre to Ascalon was one great and perpetual battle of eleven days in which King Guy fought manfully at the head of the men of Poitou.

During the severe winter which followed both armies were inactive, but the christians busied themselves with the rebuilding of Ascalon. The French, on returning to Acre, found the Pisans and Genoese engaged in a fierce conflict with each other, for the Pisans, from generosity and a sense of justice of his cause, were favorers of King Guy, while the Genoese were on the side of the marquis—chiefly on account of the oath of fidelity which he was bound to the king of France.

The Pisans, irritated by the coming of the Duke of Burgundy and the marquis, surrounded the former ; pierced his horse with a lance, and threw him to the ground. They then retreated to the city and closed and bolted the gates as a precaution against any unfavorable accident which might happen.

Shortly after this, in the spring of 1192, King Richard stated to his army that he must soon return to England because of disorder at home, and asked who wished to return and who were willing to remain. Having taken counsel the army decided that as the land was suffering from war and discord, they thought it necessary that a new king be appointed to whom all should pay allegiance, and if this was not done before the king's departure they would not remain.

The army asked that the marquis be made king instead of King Guy. King Richard censured them for their fickleness, for they had before this often detracted from the character and good qualities of the marquis.

King Richard had asked the marquis, as he had often done before, for his personal assistance to help recover the kingdom to which he aspired, but the latter refused absolutely, so that blame must deservedly be imputed to him, and over and above this he was diligently plotting against the king's crown and the army at Ascalon by entering into a treaty of peace with Saladin on the condition that he should come to him and swear to observe concord hereafter, and that the christians should have a share of the city of Jerusalem, and that he should have the fortress of Baruth and Sidon, and half the land on this side of the river Jordan.

To these terms Saladin agreed, in spite of his brother, who constantly persuaded him to accept no condition of peace with any of the christians without the consent of King Richard.

The existence of this plot was clearly proven afterward, for during the time that ambassadors were going to and fro between Saladin and the marquis, Stephen de Torneham happened to meet them coming out of Jerusalem from the presence of Saladin.

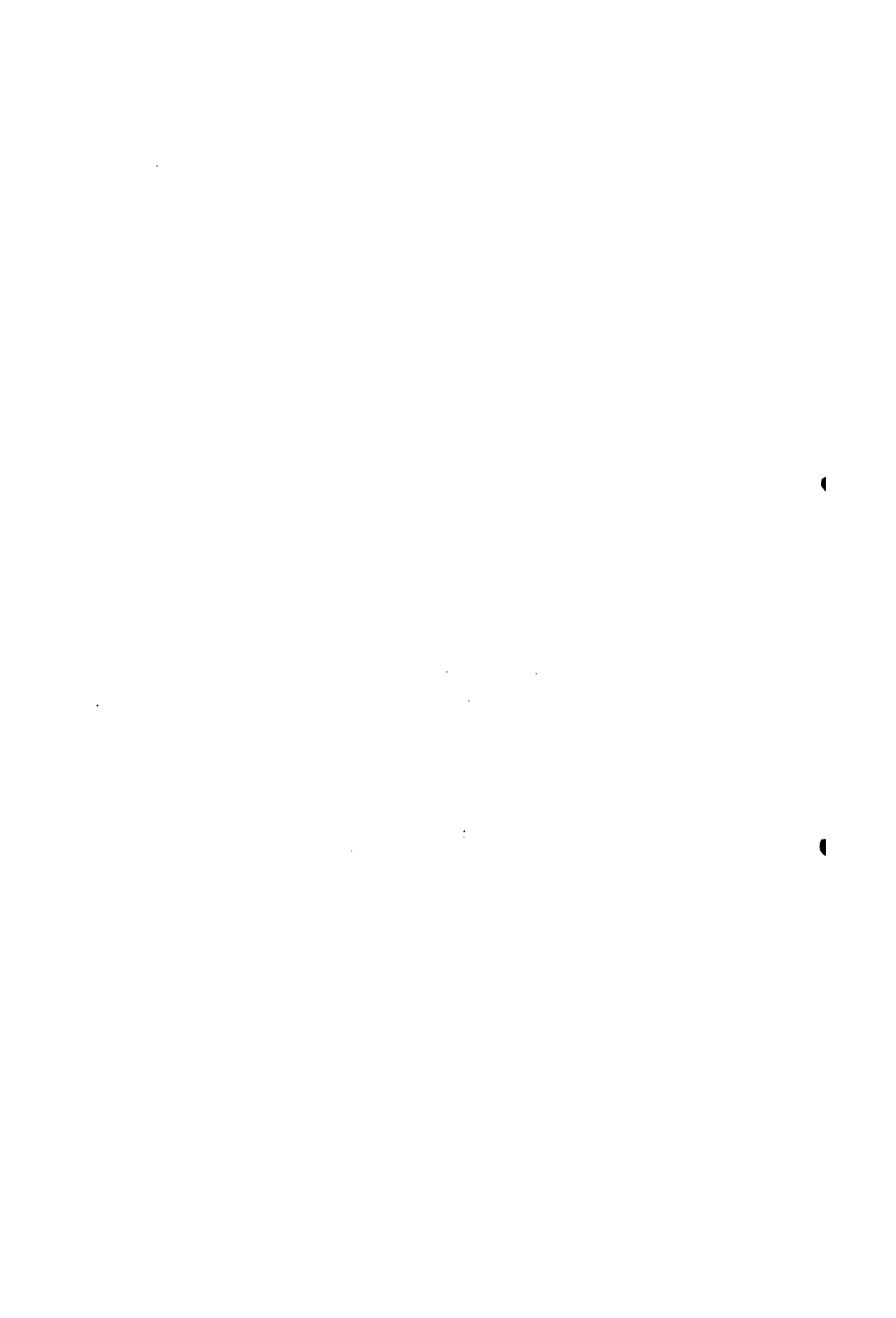
The marquis was crowned king with much pomp at Tyre, but soon after, while returning from an entertainment given by the Bishop of Beauvais, he was killed by two young men, one of whom was slain immediately, but the second took shelter in a church, but he was condemned to be dragged through the city until his life should be extinct.

Before expiring he was closely questioned in order to learn at whose instigation and for what purpose the deed had been committed, and he confessed that they had been sent a long time before by command of their superior to perpetrate the crime.

This turned out to be true, for these young men had



Jewel of the Order of St. Catherine of Mt. Sinai.



been in the service of the marquis, and the "Old Man of the Mountain, Grand-Master of the Order of the Assassins," had sent them to kill the marquis whom he thought worthy of death.

Count Henry of Champagne, a nephew of both King Richard and King Philip, was chosen King of Tyre and married the widow of the murdered marquis, who was a sister of Queen Sybilla.

King Guy now dwelt like a private man—not because he was undeserving of the kingdom, for there was not another king to be found of more royal habits or character than he, but for the reason that he was pure and noble-minded and not versed in political intrigue.

Instead of being esteemed the more on this account, as he should have been, he was accorded less consideration. He is always described as a very handsome man, and a soldier of great prowess. He conducted the siege of Acre with the greatest vigor and perseverance, but owing to the increasing numbers of the enemy on the side toward the sea, he could not storm the city which was afterwards taken by the united efforts of the three kings.

Such was the perversity of the age that he who was known to be most inhuman in his actions was thought worthy of greater honor and glory, and thus while craftiness gained respect, piety sunk into disrepute. Thus Guy was a king without a kingdom until King Richard, who honored and admired him, gave him the unconditional sovereignty of the island of Cyprus.

Guy then for a second time became king of a land he helped to conquer. The Templars had previously bought this island of Richard, but they were repaid the money they expended for it.

The death of King Guy occurred in 1194 after a reign of only two years, but the dynasty he founded lasted for three centuries.

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